

A-LIST ACOUSTIC GUITARIST - FINGERPICKING NYLON OPERATION MANUAL



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A-List Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon

Introduction



Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon is the fourth Rack Extension instrument in the A-List series for Propellerhead Reason and Reason Essentials. Think of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* as a professional session guitarist offering all kinds of broken chords, arpeggiated figures and beautiful ornaments, performed on a top-notch nylon string guitar, performing exactly as you wish while giving you extensive control over sound character, musical performance and mix. Whether you want to add realistic picking guitar tracks to your productions, use it as an inspiration for writing songs on a train or plane, or as source material for creative sound design - it will get you from idea to result as fast as possible.

At the core of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* - and all instruments in the Propellerhead A-List series - is the idea that you can create professional sounding instrument tracks exactly the way you would get them from an A-List player in the studio. There, you'd give them a lead sheet, adjust sound character and mix, and tell your session guitarist what kind of musical style and performance you're expecting - and a great player would deliver exactly that.

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon does the same thing for you: the lead sheet is represented by the MIDI notes you record or insert into your Reason tracks (or play live on a MIDI controller), there are controls for sound and mix, you load styles and select phrases in real-time, and there are performance controls to vary the performance.

Whatever *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* does, it does it extremely well, fast, and asking absolute minimal effort of you.

Try it now - it's easy and fun!

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon is designed for creating stunning, dynamic performances using very simple MIDI commands. The perfectly played phrases and styles all come built in. All you need to do is press chords and optionally bass notes, select phrases and make adjustments where useful. You can even dynamically control palm muting of the strings and the intensity of the picking for extra dynamic expression and creation of your own performances.

Here's how it basically works - and we encourage you to try it now.

1. Create an *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* device in the rack.

It will load a default style that's all you need for now.

2. Start playing on your connected MIDI keyboard or the built-in Interactive Keyboard.

- Hit a key or chord from the note C4 and upwards and *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* will start playing.
- Activate the Latch switch so it keeps playing.



- Hit the note B2 when you want to stop the playback in Latch Mode.
- Set a different Bass note by hitting a key from between C3 and B3.
- Move the Pitch Wheel to change the picking intensity.
By turning the Pitch Wheel up or down, you can ask your guitar player to play softer or harder. Use this to great effect e.g. for more expressivity and distinct intros, verses or choruses.
- Move the Mod Wheel to apply palm muting.
You can live-control palm muting using the Mod Wheel. Turning up the Mod Wheel gradually increases the pressure of the palm.
- Vary the phrasing.
Pressing keys (or generally: sending MIDI notes) between C1 and Bb2 selects phrases. The lowest octave selects a set of standard phrases, the C2-Bb2 octave selects phrases of the currently loaded style.
- Change the sound character.
Use the Mics selector and the Character control to vary the overall tone of the guitar. Turn the Animate control clockwise and notice how overtones and modulation are added to the sound.
- Add a second guitar player.
Activate the Doubling button in the performance section to activate a second player (similar to overdubbing in the studio), with the players panned left and right in the stereo image.

Background

It is important to know that *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* does not emulate a guitar. It does not let you edit individual notes, but it also does not require you to know how to play a guitar on a keyboard, or to think about how to emulate realistic picking or typical guitar voicings. It has all that intelligence built in and will always play real guitar voicings no matter what notes you input.

! That also means that the notes you play on the keyboard are not always necessarily the notes you will hear back from *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*. This may need a little while to get used to, but it's a built-in guarantee that your performances are indistinguishable from a real guitar performance.

What *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* emulates is therefore a studio guitarist who already knows how to play. Because when you have an idea in your head and want to get it to "tape", the last thing you want to do is having to struggle with MIDI editing and trying to make a MIDI performance sound realistic. What you need is a professional player recording your idea the way you want it. That's exactly what *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* does.

The foundation of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* is a top-notch nylon-string guitar, played by a professional guitar player and recorded with high-end studio microphones.

These recordings are embedded into a custom intelligent voicing and phrasing engine, turning *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* into a Rack Extension that can virtually play any guitar phrase at any tempo and always sound like an original performance.

Panel overview

The *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* front panel contains the following sections:



Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon front panel sections.

- **1. Source section** (for selecting guitar and amp character, adjusting Crunch and choosing drop tuning).
- **2. Performance section** (for telling the "virtual player" which Style to play and for tweaking a few performance parameters).
- **3. Mix section** (for adjusting Animate, Attack, Reverb and Volume of the audio output).
- **4. Patch selector** (for browsing, loading and saving patches).
- **5. Interactive keyboard** (for telling the "virtual player" which Phrases, Bass Notes and Chords to play).

Loading and saving patches



Loading and saving patches is done in the same way as with any other internal Reason/Reason Essentials device - see the "Sounds and Patches" chapter in the Reason/Reason Essentials Operation Manual pdf for details.

You'll find a small selection of patches in the root level. These will give you an overview of the sound capabilities of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*. A lot more patches can be found in subfolders, sorted by categories and genres.

- ! **On instantiating *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*, or when loading Combinator Patches featuring *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*, it can take a few seconds until all content is loaded into RAM.**

Panel controls

Source section



In this section you set the basic sound character of the Guitar.

Mics

The source material of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* has been recorded using two different high-end small-diaphragm condenser microphones. The Mics selector lets you choose between five different selections of those two signals:

- **A**
This is the mono output of Microphone A, which has a nice neutral sound, slightly on the crisp side.
- **B**
Microphone B provides a somewhat fatter sound than Microphone A. Select this option to get pure B played in mono.
- **A+B**
This option mixes A and B into a mono signal.
- **A/B**
This is one of two stereo output options: Mic A on the left channel and B on the right. You can use this to route and treat each signal individually in Reason's mixer, or to create a stereo effect without using Doubling or a second instance of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*.
- **B/A**
Same as A/B but with channels swapped. Try both options in a mix to find out which one sits better in the stereo image.

Character

The Character knob adjusts the recorded signal before it gets fed into sound processors inside *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*. It offers five distinct settings:

Knob position	Character	Use...
Rich	Accentuated root note, slightly boosted low and high ends.	... if you want the guitar to be one of the dominant instruments in your mix or to have it support your chord progression.
Full	Slightly boosted low and high ends.	... for a modern, warm sound that fits most arrangements.
Original	Untreated signal, straight from the microphone(s).	... for a straight acoustic guitar character, or if you plan to do all sonic treatment in the mixer or using studio processors.

Knob position	Character	Use...
Bright	Pronounced high mids.	... for a guitar track that blends well with other harmonic/chord tracks, especially in bigger arrangements. Allows you to bring down the level and still keep the picking "recognizable".
Sheen	Boosted and slightly compressed treble.	... add high end animation to any mix, often as a complement or replacement for Hi-hat or percussion, without interfering with other chord sounds. Works particularly well with Doubling activated.

Fret Noise

When changing from one chord to another, the fingers sliding on the fretboard create characteristic noises that are essential for the authentic character of an acoustic guitar. *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* has an algorithm that produces these noises dynamically exactly where they would occur on a real guitar. Sometimes you may want a totally clean signal - for example in electronic music - in this case you can deactivate any Fret Noise with this button.

Position

The Position knob emulates moving the picking hand between bridge and neck.

- **The center position represents the recording position - the fingers picking over the sound hole - and is therefore neutral.**
- Turn the knob to the left (moving the virtual hand towards the bridge) for a thinner sound with more attack.
- Turn the knob to the right (moving the virtual hand towards the neck) for a more full-bodied, hollow sound.

Performance section



This section is a mixture of selectors, knobs and displays for selecting and adjusting the musical performance.

Styles and Phrases

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon is designed to produce arpeggiated guitar tracks. It doesn't play melodies, but phrases (or figures). A phrase in this context is a rhythmic sequence of picked or strummed strings matching the played chord.

A Style in *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* is a collection of phrases of a certain musical context. Styles are given descriptive names. Phrases, although, are not named but numbered.

- **As you move from left to right on the keyboard's phrase ranges (C#1 - Bb2), phrases become more intense - i.e. denser and more animated.**

You can add to the dynamic expression of a song by selecting phrases accordingly: As you progress from intro to verse to chorus, move right on the phrase selection keys and vice versa.

! The Phrase playback is always triggered by the MIDI Note On; it's not synced to the sequencer's bar position.

The reason for this is you might not always want the phrase locked to the bar position. This way you can be more creative with re-triggering the phrases and get more "live feel". If you want the guitar performance locked to the bar position in the sequencer, just position the trigger notes accordingly. If you change MIDI notes in a legato fashion (tied), the new notes will continue the "phrase-sync" from the previous note.

Style

In this menu, you can select one of the 60 included musical styles. Each style features 11 individual phrases (see "Style Phrases").

Speed

Choose between regular playback speed, half time and double time to match your song's feel.

Doubling

Use this function to create the impression of two independent players playing at the same time.

When active, *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* will add a second guitar player to the currently selected signal and place them at opposite stereo positions.

Latch

Use this toggle switch to determine if *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* should always keep playing or only play when keys are held.

If on, *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* will keep playing after a bass note or chord is pressed, until either Latch is switched off or the Stop button in the Reason/Reason Essentials sequencer is pressed.

A sustain pedal can be used as a temporary latch (but does not affect the appearance of the Latch switch). Lifting the sustain pedal unlatches any notes that are no longer held, even if the Latch switch is still on, see "Sustain Pedal".

Swing

This knob gradually applies a shuffle feel to the guitar performance by delaying the off-beats.

Depending on the selected style, 8th or 16th note off-beats will be affected. At maximum position, the off-beat will have the same timing as the last note of a triplet.

Not all phrases contain 8th or 16th note off-beats, so in these cases the Swing control has no effect.

Timing

This knob controls the timing accuracy of the virtual player. Turning it to the left will lead to a more machine-like precision, turning it to the right will add more and more human feel by bringing in small random timing variations.

Feel

With this control you can tell the virtual player to push or play laid back, i.e. it affects the overall timing of the guitar performance. Right from center, off-beats will be slightly advanced (Push), left from center they will be delayed (Pull).

Variance

Variance lets you control the dynamic variation of the performance. Turn it left, and your guitarist will play with almost robotic steady dynamics - this is often preferred in electronic music. Turn the control to the right adds more and more variation in picking intensity between notes, making the performance way more natural and human.

Mix section



The controls in this section allow you to add the Animate effect and Reverb, and adjust the attack transients and volume of the output signal.

Animate

Animate is a multi-effect specially designed for *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*. A custom combination of modulating comb filters, saturation and convolution adds rich and vivid harmonics and an airy, spherical feel.

Reverb

Adds the ambience of a studio recording room to the guitar sound. If you're not using external effects, you should always dial in a little reverb to avoid the guitar sounding dry and artificial.

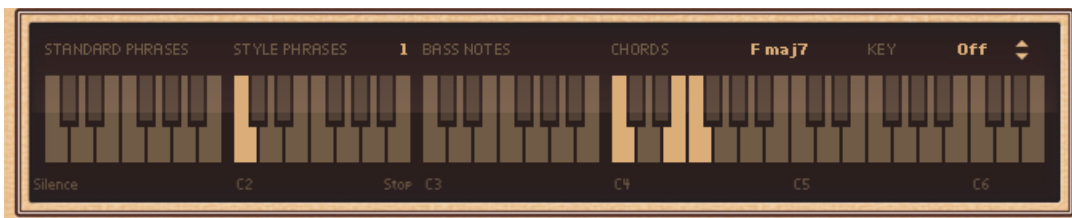
Attack

When turned left, this control softens the attack transient of the guitar signal and accentuates the sustained portion. When turned right, it makes the attack transient more pronounced.

Volume

Adjusts the audio output volume of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* for maintaining an optimal input level into the mixer or subsequent audio processors.

Interactive keyboard



The interactive keyboard is both a display of received MIDI notes and a working on-screen keyboard. The left side of the keyboard (Standard Phrases, Style Phrases and Bass Notes) doesn't make any sound by itself. Here, you control the performance of the guitarist by switching between 22 different phrases. The right half of these phrases are set by the style, the left half is identical for all Styles. The Bass Notes section lets you select the Bass Note to play along with the chord. The right side of the keyboard (Chords) determines which chord *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* plays based on the note(s) you send.

! The interactive keyboard does not get recorded. Use a MIDI keyboard or the Reason/Reason Essentials On-screen Piano Keys for this purpose.

Standard Phrases

The lowest octave of the MIDI keyboard (C#1 - B1) is reserved for a collection of so-called "Standard Phrases". These phrases are "hard-wired" and won't change with the Style selection.

Standard Phrases complement the Style Phrases by phrasings that are more generic and applicable to multiple contexts. Combine them with the Style Phrases for a large variety of figures.

Five of the Standard Phrases are one-shot phrases that don't loop: C#1, D1, D#1, Bb1, and B1.

! Phrases are what you make of them. *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* lets you switch phrases in real-time without interrupting the performance. That's a great way to create dynamic and interesting phrasings of your own.

Style Phrases

Keys in this area select phrases of the currently selected Style (see "Style").

Phrases in the Style range start with the lowest density/intensity on C2 and get more complex as you move towards Bb2.

You could generally work your way through a song going from left (intro, verse) to right (chorus), but of course this greatly depends on the style and your song. Just know you always have 11 different arpeggios plus the Standard Phrases at your immediate disposal.

The highest key of the Style Range - B2 - is the Stop key. In Latch mode, pressing this key will stop playback whereas the Silent key (C1) will keep playback going, just with an empty phrase.

Bass Notes

Keys in the Bass Notes section allow you to play a bass note that's different from the currently played chord. The occurrence of played bass notes depends on the selected Style and Phrase, some combinations play bass notes very frequently, some don't at all.

Chords

Keys in the Chords range function almost like a regular musical keyboard: you start and stop the guitarist's performance and you determine the chords played. It's like playing keyboard, except that instead of playing notes you select the chord the guitarist will perform as a phrase.

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon recognizes and plays 14 chord types. More on chords and how to make best use of them in "Chord Fingerings".

Key

This control sets a key for the song, forcing all chord input to the most useful chords in the selected key. Please be aware that selecting a key does not affect which bass notes are played.

- In the "Off" position, all chords in all keys are available:

Played Note:	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
Played back Chord:	Cmaj	C#maj	Dmaj	Ebmaj	Emaj	Fmaj	F#maj	Gmaj	Abmaj	Amaj	Bbmaj	Bmaj

- In any other position (C, C#, D, Eb etc.), only the chords matching the set scale are available (see below).

Using the Key parameter has a potential benefit: It's a handy helper if your keyboard or musical skills are basic, or if you want to simplify chord input in general, as it will "quantize" all chord input to chords that aren't entirely wrong for the given key.

When a key is set, these are the chords *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* will play depending on the actual input - shown in the key of C:

Played Note:	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
Played back Chord:	Cmaj	Csus4	Dmin	Ebmaj	Emin	Fmaj	Fsus4	Gmaj	Gsus4	Amin	Bbmaj	G7

The currently played back chord and bass note is always displayed in the interactive keyboard display.

Building Custom Phrases

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon comes with more than 670 built-in phrases. If you need even more creative freedom you can create your own phrases by triggering single pickings of any guitar string at any time.

There are two ways to do so:

Using the “Manual Picking Mode” Combinator Patch

The simple way is to load the Combinator patch "Manual Picking Mode". This Combi is all set up to let you select chords between C1 and B2 and play individual strings above C3.

In this Combinator, the received notes are velocity sensitive which gives you full dynamic flexibility.

Here's how to trigger individual slices in this Combi:

MIDI Note ranges	Function
C3 octave	Play long notes.
C4 octave	Play right hand mutes.
C5 octave	Play notes with a left hand mute when released.
C6 octave	Play notes with a right hand mute when released.

This is what each note in each octave does:

MIDI Note	Function
C	Play string 1.
C#	Mute
D	Play string 2.
Eb	Stop
E	Play string 3.
F	Play string 4.
F#	Play fret noise (string 1).
G	Play string 5.
Ab	Play fret noise (string 2).
A	Play string 6.
Bb	Play fret noise (string 3).
B	Play string 3 with thumb.

Using CV Inputs

The CV/Gate input on the rear panel of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* interprets notes differently than the MIDI input. Notes from C1 to B4 don't select phrases and chords, but individual single string notes which are laid out across the note range.

Connect an RPG-8 and deactivate its arpeggiator function to convert MIDI signals into CV signals. In *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* select the Silence phrase (C1) and activate Latch. Select any chord by clicking the on-screen keyboard between C4 and E6. Now use your MIDI input device from C1 to B4 to trigger picking of individual guitar strings while your virtual player holds the selected chord.

➤ You could also try the CV functionality using a Matrix pattern sequencer.

! **Note that this just replaces the phrase selection - you will still need to send chord notes via MIDI Input to get the guitarist picking away!**

Note ranges	Function
C1 octave	Play long notes.
C2 octave	Play right hand mutes.
C3 octave	Play notes with a left hand mute when released.
C4 octave	Play notes with a right hand mute when released.

This is what each note in each octave does:

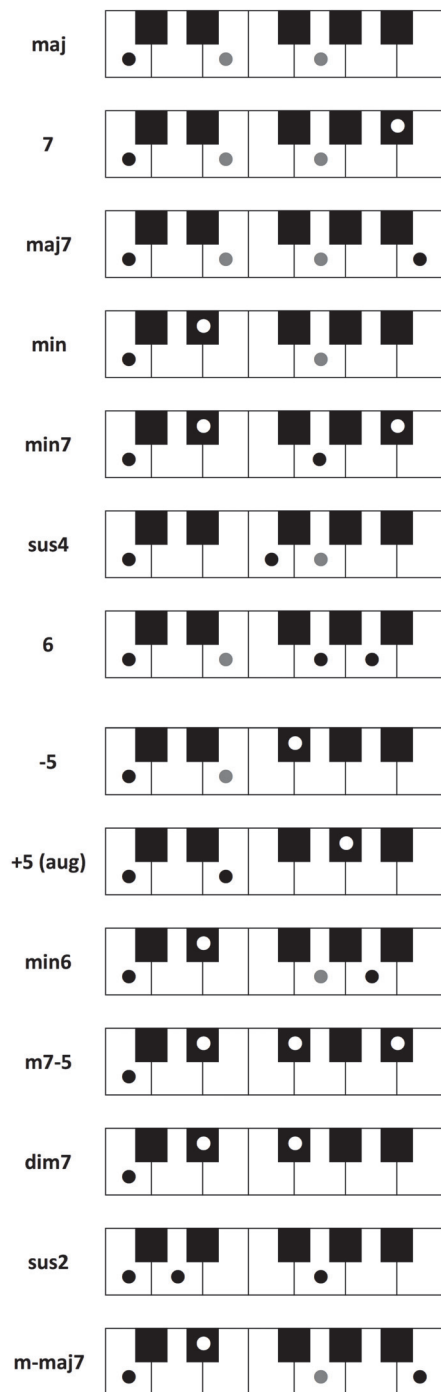
Note CV Input	Function
C	Play string 1.
C#	Mute
D	Play string 2.
Eb	Stop
E	Play string 3.
F	Play string 4.
F#	Play fret noise (string 1).
G	Play string 5.
Ab	Play fret noise (string 2).
A	Play string 6.
Bb	Play fret noise (string 3).
B	Play string 3 with thumb.

See "CV Input".

Chord Fingerings

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon has a built-in chord detection system that interprets incoming MIDI notes. The picture shows the fingering schemes for each chord (reference key C):

! Note that the black and white dots indicate the required notes. Grey dots indicate optional notes.



Chord Fingerings (grey dots indicate optional keys).

MIDI Controllers

Pitch Bend

Use the Pitch Bend to control the picking intensity (velocity). Turn it down, and your guitarist will play softer, turn it up for extra intensity. Using the Pitch Bend is a very simply way of greatly enhancing the musical performance across the song's arc, so we highly recommend using it.

Mod Wheel

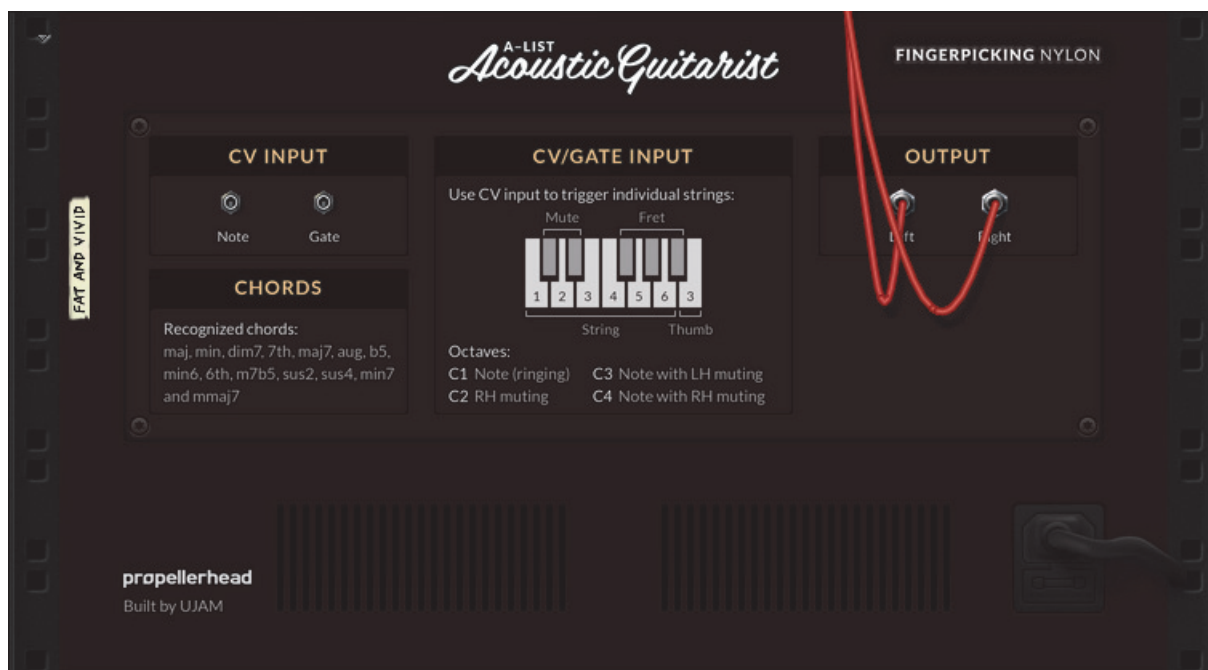
Palm Muting is a powerful method for live-controlling the phrasing of *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon*.

- **The Mod Wheel controls the Palm Muting that your guitarist applies to the performance.**
In the Mod Wheel's default position, no Palm Muting is applied. The further you turn it up, the shorter the notes will become. The maximum position of the Mod Wheel produces almost "tone-less" muted picking.
- **You can add Palm Muting after the fact by adding a lane to your *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* track and recording a Mod Wheel performance on top of your notes. Experiment with multiple tracks with different Mod Wheel performances for greatly enhanced live feel and two-player impressions.**

Sustain Pedal

The Sustain Pedal replicates the "Latch" button, so you can use it as an additional way of varying phrases in real-time. Pressing the Sustain Pedal activates latching of chord notes. Releasing the Sustain Pedal releases any latched chord notes even if the Latch button is on.

Connections



- ! **Remember that CV connections are NOT stored in the *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* patches! If you want to store CV connections between devices, put them in a Combinator device and save the Combi patch.**

CV Input

The Note and Gate CV inputs can be used for adding extra phrase creation options by using the CV output from another CV/Gate device (typically a Matrix or an RPG-8). Note that the Gate input also responds to keyboard velocity. Please refer to “[Building Custom Phrases](#)” above.

Output

On the right are the main audio outputs. When you create a new *Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon* device, these outputs are auto-routed to the first available channel in the Reason/Reason Essentials main mixer.

Advanced tips

Optimizing chord recognition

Acoustic Guitarist - Fingerpicking Nylon tries to be as tolerant to sloppy chord input as technically possible, but particularly when live-recording to a MIDI track, you may end up with it not playing the chords you had in mind. It's really easy to fix this situation if you keep a few things in mind:

→ **Thoughtfully adjust and/or quantize your MIDI notes in the sequencer.**

Notes with different starting positions can lead to multiple chords getting recognized one after another, or cut-off chords.

On the other hand, the rhythmical content of the style "Minnesang" e.g. demands chord switches to be slightly before the upbeat to sound right.

→ **Clean up note lengths to make sure there are no note gaps or overlaps.**

In the Legato Adjustments section of Reason's/Reason Essentials' Tool Window you can force legato and remove overlaps.